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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Kazakhstan Moves Cautiously Toward KAZBRIG Deployment;
Requesting U.S. Guidance

REF: A) ASTANA 1808 B) STATE 90022

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Government of Kazakhstan (GOK) has indicated that it is ready to commit units from its light infantry brigade, "KAZBRIG" to an overseas Peace Support Operation (PSO). An official announcement is expected after the details of the deployment (location, command and control ((C2)) relationships, timing, size, and support) have been determined. GOK Air Mobile Forces (AMF) has discreetly requested U.S. input into their planning process and is seeking U.S. advice in determining these details. Five areas of operation are being considered: Afghanistan, Darfur/Sudan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Iraq. AMF has asked that U.S. officials keep this information in confidence until the GOK has made an official announcement of its intentions. End summary.

ANNOUNCEMENT

¶2. (U) While speaking on camera with the British Defense Attach (DATT) during Steppe Eagle 2007 opening ceremonies, Chief of Defense (Chod) and former MinDef, General of the Army Mukhtar Altynbayev publicly stated that Kazakhstan is ready to commit to deploying troops in support of PSOs. Steppe Eagle is a bilateral GOK-UK military exercise in which U.S. forces also participate. The goal of the exercise is to prepare a cadre of GOK military forces for PSOs. The opening ceremony, which was covered by television and mass-media, took place on 10 September 2007, on the Illiskii Training Area, northwest of the city of Almaty.

¶3. (SBU) Following Altynbayev's public comments, General-Major (U.S. equivalent: Brigadier General) Murat Maikeyev, Commander AMF, told U.S. Air Attach that more information, as well as a request for U.S. input, would be forthcoming. This came during a teleconference between U.S. DATT and a senior member of the AMF planning staff (and confidant of Gen Maikeyev) on 12 September.

BACKGROUND

¶4. (SBU) This announcement follows several months of intense discussion within the AMF resulting in a clear understanding that KAZBRIG must deploy in the very near future. For the past two years, General-Major Maikeyev, has been receiving guidance from U.S. and UK DATTs. In March 2007, with their inputs, Maikeyev put the final touches on a proposal for the MinDef, stating that KAZBRIG needed to deploy. Maikeyev told the U.S. DATT that he would need six months to bring his plan to fruition (which coincided nicely with the Steppe Eagle Exercise).

MOTIVATION

5. (SBU) GOK and AMF need to deploy KAZBRIG for three reasons; First, a deployment would improve KAZBRIG morale and troop retention. In the past, KAZBRIG has had difficulty retaining enough trained soldiers to remain effective due to low morale, and many of the soldiers which have received military and language training from the US and UK have left the unit; Second, President Nazarbayev has declared that Kazakhstan will participate in global (preferably UN) humanitarian/PSOs; Third, U.S. and UK have made it clear to GOK that deploying KAZBRIG to a meaningful mission and location is one of the primary reasons that they are receiving military training and equipment.

LOCATION & C2 RELATIONSHIPS

¶6. (SBU) AMF is considering five deployment locations listed in approximate order of preference; Afghanistan, Darfur/Sudan, Kosovo, }Q00j=JQ0qda['Qeployment to a Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in a relatively secure part of Afghanistan may be its best fit. AMF will deploy an entirely inexperienced light infantry company for the first time. It desires a deployment to a less dangerous location, and does not believe sending additional forces to Iraq would be in its best interest. AMF explained that Kosovo is probably not politically acceptable to the GOK due to differences between the U.S. and Russia over its future (the GOK does not want to be seen as playing toward one side or the other). AMF liked certain aspects of both the Darfur/Sudan and Lebanon scenarios, however, it wants to deploy where the operational language will be English, not French. The KAZBRIG has invested heavily in English-laaM0(Qcapability to use. It also wants to deploy to an

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area where it can benefit from U.S. assistance, and is concerned that this might be more difficult if it were to deploy under French leadership.

TIMING & SIZE

17. (SBU) AMF would like to deploy a platoon sized force (approx. 35 troops) by mid-2008. It expects to increase this to a company sized unit (approx. 102 troops) shortly thereafter. The goal is to use one of the eventual three infantry battalions of the KAZBRIG to keep a light infantry company in constant rotation by the end of 2009.

U.S., NATO, or U.N. SUPPORT

18. (SBU) AMF is seeking information about available funds to assist their forces to deploy to a PSO. They are interested in information on U.S., NATO, and U.N. financial and logistical support, as well as predeployment training programs, and will include availability of this support into their decision making process.

REQUEST FOR U.S. INPUT

19. (SBU) AMF has discreetly requested U.S. input into their planning process and is seeking the advice of U.S. government agencies, and U.S. delegations to international agencies, in determining the details of the deployment. Post requests that this information be consolidated for reply and submission at a later date.

EXPECTAION THAT INFORMATION BE KEPT IN U.S. CONFIDENCE

10. (SBU) In requesting U.S. input into their planning process, AMF has asked that U.S. officials keep this information in confidence. AMF is working to determine the details of a proposal that they will submit to the GOK approval, and they cannot commit their leadership to a course of action before a final decision has been made. They understand that various U.S. agencies and delegations (NATO, U.N. etc.) will be brought into the discussion, but they have specifically requested that discussion of the specifics of this deployment be limited to the U.S. government. They request that it not be brought up in any concrete manner to coalition partners or announced in any public forum until after the GOK makes an official public announcement of its intentions. We assured AMF that the U.S. government would honor this request.